



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact: Kevin Kerstein
Publicity Manager
Churchill Downs Racetrack
(610) 420-6971 (mobile)
(502) 635-4712 (office)
Kevin.Kerstein@KyDerby.com

SCHERER FINDS ‘NEW ‘PROJECT’ OVERSEEING WARD’S CHURCHILL DOWNS STRING

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Sunday, June 7, 2020) – When veteran trainer **Merrill Scherer** planned his return to Kentucky this spring from New Orleans, he was going to help his son, **Eric**, and daughter-in-law, **Marianne**, with their small string of horses at Churchill Downs’ Trackside Louisville. That plan changed when Scherer received a call from longtime friend **Wesley Ward** asking for help with his Churchill Downs division of horses.

“I was sitting down in New Orleans this winter and Wesley called me and asked what I was going to do this spring,” said Scherer, who turns 81 in July. “I was down on horses and had planned to come back to Louisville to hang out with my son. When Wesley asked me to come help out at the barn, of course I told him I would.”

Scherer has nearly six decades of experience training horses and has 1,413 victories since statistics started being regularly kept for horse racing in 1976. Scherer spent the majority of his training career based in Louisiana and was introduced to Ward’s father, Dennis, in the 1960s.

“Since I took that phone call from Wesley, I’ve dropped eight pounds and ate more food than ever before,” Scherer joked. “I’ve got a good pep in my step working with these horses.”

Ward’s horses are stabled in Barn 35 at Churchill Downs. The world-traveling Ward has horses based throughout the U.S. and targets many of the international race meets including Royal Ascot. While Ward has become a regular trainer on the international scene, Scherer plans to remain stateside.

“I don’t have a passport and a top hat would look goofy on my head. I’m staying right here,” Scherer said.

VOLATILE EARNS 109 BRISNET SPEED RATING WITH SCINTILLATING ARISTIDES VICTORY – **Phoenix Thoroughbred III** and **Three Chimneys Farm**’s top-class sprinter **Volatile** earned a stout 109 Brisnet Speed Figure with his eye-catching eight-length score in Saturday’s \$100,000 Aristides presented by Woodford Reserve (Listed).

Volatile, trained by Hall of Famer **Steve Asmussen**, was two one-hundredths of a second off the 13-year-old track record when he stopped the clock in a scorching 1:07.57 for six furlongs. The racetrack was still buzzing Sunday morning after Volatile recorded what some deemed one of the most impressive performances they have seen beneath the Twin Spires.

“I’ve been around horses for a long time and to see a horse have that much acceleration, so quickly, is incredible,” said retired trainer and Churchill Downs racing official **Steve Penrod**.

With Volatile’s victory in the Aristides, Asmussen moved one win closer to becoming Churchill Downs’ all-time leading trainer. Asmussen trailed **Dale Romans** 737-to-736 wins at the start of Sunday’s 10-race program at Churchill Downs.

“It’s been a little bit frustrating not getting there yet,” Asmussen said. “We are thankful a horse like Volatile got us one step closer to that mark.”

Asmussen had three horses entered on Sunday while Romans had one.

HONOR A. P. MOVES TO NO. 2 ON ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY LEADERBOARD WITH SANTA ANITA DERBY VICTORY – **C R K Stable**’s **Honor A. P.** (120 points) moved to No. 2 on the Road to the Kentucky Derby Leaderboard following his late-closing victory in Saturday’s \$401,000 Santa Anita Derby (Grade I).

The Top 5 horses on the leaderboard are **Tiz the Law** (122 points), **Honor A.P.** (120), **Wells Bayou** (104), **Authentic** (100) and late Triple Crown nominee **King Guillermo** (90).

Trainer **Bob Baffert**’s duo of Arkansas Derby (GI) winners **Charlatan** (100) and **Nadal** (150) were both removed from contention for the Sept. 5 Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (GI). Nadal, who was the points leader entering Saturday’s Santa Anita Derby suffered a condylar fracture following a workout last week at Santa Anita and will be retired to stud duties in Kentucky while his stablemate Charlatan suffered a minor ankle injury that will require 45 days on the sidelines.

The next race on the Road to the Kentucky Derby is the \$1 million Belmont Stakes (GI) on June 20. The first leg of this year’s Triple Crown series will award the Top 4 finishers points on a 150-60-30-15 scale.

On the Road to the Longines Kentucky Oaks, **Swiss Skydiver**'s emphatic four-length win in Saturday's \$200,000 Santa Anita Oaks (GII) vaulted her point total to 310. The Top 5 horses on the Road to the Kentucky Oaks leaderboard: Swiss Skydiver (310), **Bonny South** (100), **Finite** (80), **Shedaresthedevil** (70) and **Donna Veloce** (62).

For the complete leaderboard for the Road to the Kentucky Derby and Kentucky Oaks, visit www.kentuckyderby.com.

DOWN THE STRETCH – There were 10 races on the schedule for Sunday's card at Churchill Downs that had a first post of 1 p.m. There was a \$185,159 carryover in the 20-cent Single 6 Jackpot that spanned Races 5-10. ... Sunday's work tab at Churchill Downs featured 16 horses that recorded breezes over the Matt Winn Turf Course, including a :47.60 half-mile move from multiple stakes winner **Factor This**. Another horse who recorded a turf work Sunday morning was Factor This' stablemate, Grade I winner **Arklow** (half-mile, :49.20) who is a probable entrant for next weekend's \$100,000 Louisville presented by Longines. ... Racing will continue Thursday-Sunday at Churchill Downs with a first post of 1 p.m. The rail on the Matt Winn Turf Course will be in Lane 2, 15 ft. from the hedge, on Thursday and Friday. The temporary rail will be in Lane 1 on Saturday and Sunday.

-END-